

Summer Food Service Program Timeline for Getting Started

NOVEMBER	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Find out how the SFSP has been working in your area and start considering agencies that might be potential sites Start talking to staff about instituting your participation in the SFSP. Make the internal commitments necessary and decide who will be responsible for the program. Identify your state SFSP representative and schedule a time to talk with them in December.
DECEMBER	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contact your state SFSP representative before the end of the calendar year to get dates for information and training sessions specific to your state.
JANUARY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Check your state's SFSP website for updates. Call the SFSP representative to register for the mandatory SFSP training classes. The closer it gets to summer, the faster these classes fill up; you will be glad to have gotten your training over with early.
FEBRUARY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Begin working on your application. Yes, it is still the middle of winter, but you have some very important things to do, such as starting the bid process (you will want to start thinking about what you want from a vendor, and advertising for bids). Start to make decisions on potentially costly issues, such as whether your food bank will hire additional staff, contract for deliveries, vend or self-prepare meals, etc. Make sure that the food bank's senior management understands these costs and approves your actions before you finalize any outside contracts. You may want to have an informational meeting at this time to present your plan and explain the purpose of the SFSP. Solicit potential sites with letters and phone calls. Do not over-state the program in your communications; simply ask them if they would be interested in operating a free lunch site for needy children. Set strict success criteria with each chosen site before you enter into a SFSP partnership with them. <p>Note: In some states, trainings are held in February. Check with your SFSP representative for specific dates. It is mandatory that you attend one of the training sessions to operate the SFSP program so plan early.</p>
MARCH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Begin working on your training materials early and set numerous training dates for April and May. Each person at every site must learn the complete SFSP protocol, so it is a good idea to start now. Partner with the sites that you feel will be the best candidates for the program. Make sure to use the correct forms in your application. It is also a good idea to have a contract with the sites that outlines roles and responsibilities. If you have never operated the program before and are unsure of what your local Health Department requirements are, contact them to get information on what equipment your sites will need for food service. Continue the competitive bid process if you will be working with a vendor who is not a School Food Authority (SFA). Set a deadline for the last day you will accept new sites – generally April 30th. In some states, new sites will have to be visited by your State Contract Manager before they are approved. Since your Contract Manager has several other SFSP Contractors besides you, he or she may not be able to approve all of your new sites before summer if they are not chosen early.

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MARCH cont.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you are working with a vendor, iron out a process for adjusting the number of meals that will be delivered to reduce leftovers (i.e. do sites call you daily with meal counts? Only if it varied by more than 5 meals? Do they call the vendor directly?). Have this process ready to present during your staff training. • Start thinking about transportation of both meals and children as you start to develop your budget.
APRIL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submit your application to your Contract Manager. • Begin to train SFSP site staff as soon as it is approved. The earlier you turn in your application, the sooner you may begin training. (Some states application deadlines fall in May or June, but most are in April. Check with your state SFSP representative for the actual deadline you must meet). <p>Personal Note: If you have any extra vacation time that you need to take before you food bank ends its fiscal year; plan it before the summer begins. Those who are working with SFSP will not want to take vacation during the summer before the program has ended.</p>
MAY	<p>Note: This is generally the month that your Contract Manager should have communicated to you that he or she has approved the application and granted your food bank's SFSP contract.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begin hiring and training the food bank's SFSP administrative and operations staff. Even non-SFSP staff, such as your warehouse and administration staff will have to be briefed on the USDA Civil Rights requirements (you will receive a copy of the requirements from your state agency). Have all staff sign training sheets to document that they were briefed. • Conduct trainings for your monitoring staff if they have not attended the state agency training. • Conduct most of your sit training sessions this month. Toward the end of May, expect that you will train larger classes, as everyone who put off training in April rushes to meet the requirement at the last minute. • Make the purchases necessary for the program's operation. • Conduct Pre-Operational visits for all new sites using forms provided by your state agency. Check for: all necessary equipment, appropriate refrigerator temperatures, adequate meal service areas, cleanliness, accessibility, signs stating the Designated Serving Time and Civil Rights posters, and verify that it will be a safe place for children to enjoy meals. Each site may also need to be visited and approved by your Contract Manager. • Notify your local Health Department that you intend to operate sites for the SFSP. Some county Health Departments will require that your sites apply for a temporary permit in order to operate.
JUNE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete a media release with site information and conduct outreach to generate participation in the program. Successful methods used by food banks include hosting "Kick Off" events, distributing flyers to students before school ends (this comes faster than you might think), public service announcements, advertising on buses, and distributing program information at libraries.



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JULY/AUGUST	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• One week prior to the start of the program go to each site and ensure that all of the equipment, training materials, posters, paper products, cleaning supplies, thermometers, gloves, etc., are available and the site is ready for operations to begin.• Confirm delivery schedule if working with a vendor.• Continue media outreach!• Once the program begins, monitor each site in compliance with your state agency's requirements, or more often if required to ensure smooth programmatic operations. During these visits, look for compliance with meal pattern regulations, accurate paperwork, and enforcement of the non-discrimination policy.• At the end of the program, collect all paperwork from each site (you will need to keep these forms for 3 years) and begin compiling numbers to submit your claim for reimbursement.
SEPTEMBER	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Compile all numbers from your summer program and complete your state agency's claim for reimbursement• Evaluate what went well in your program and start planning for next year!